

Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Insects

The Royal Entomological Society called a meeting on 21st June 1968 to set up an independent, broadly based committee for the conservation of insects, following the dissolution of both its own Conservation (Insect Protection) Committee and the Entomological Liaison Committee of the Nature Conservancy. At its first meeting, on 1st November 1968, the scope and representation of the new committee was widened so that it now consists of representatives of the Royal Entomological Society, British Trust for Entomology, British Entomological and Natural History Society, Amateur Entomologists' Society, British Butterfly Conservation Society, a representative of the Keeper of Entomology [British Museum (Natural History)] and regional representatives. The Forestry Commission sends an observer, and the Nature Conservancy and Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves are also represented. Mr N. D. Riley, C.B.E., has accepted the chairmanship of the Committee.

The Committee's terms of reference are:

1. To prepare a register of species requiring conservation and to investigate their status.
2. To consider what form of conservation (if any) would be the most suitable in any given case.
3. To act as a forum for the consideration of any matters relevant to items 1 and 2 above.
4. To initiate and promote any action that appears necessary for the purpose of securing the conservation of threatened species or habitats, including the promotion of legislation.
5. To act in liaison with the Nature Conservancy, the Conservation Committee of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves and other appropriate bodies in all matters concerning the conservation of British insects and their habitats.

Populations of insects are threatened by many factors in our modern, industrialised society. These threats may be summarised as:

1. *Destruction of habitat.* This is an important factor which is under the control of man. It has been estimated that between 1951 and 1971 750,000 acres of agricultural land will have been taken for building in England and Wales.

2. *Changes in land use.* Forestry, when it concentrates on the production of conifers, is particularly harmful to insect populations, and so are many aspects of agricultural improvement, such as the destruction of hedgerows, ploughing-up of old pasture and the draining of fens and marshes. Neglect or abandonment of former management practices, such as the coppicing of woodland and grazing of chalk grassland has an adverse effect on populations of some species. Public pressure on the countryside for recreation also affects populations of insects, and this is likely to increase considerably in the future.

It is particularly important to manage wisely those areas of countryside which have not been changed greatly for the conservation of insects and other forms of wild life, so that they can be properly enjoyed by all.

3. *Toxic chemicals and pollution.* Pesticides (including herbicides) undoubtedly affect many insects adversely. The threats to wild life posed

by the use of pesticides are sufficiently serious for a government committee to be considering the restriction of use of certain especially persistent substances which can contaminate the environment well away from the point of application.

The chemical pollution and heating of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds frequently kill aquatic insects on a large scale. Atmospheric pollution from industrial sources may destroy the food or habitat of insect species unable to adapt quickly to change.

It is the task of the new Joint Committee to advise and co-operate with the conservation movement as a whole in finding solutions to these problems. Particular attention will be given to species of national rarity and those in special need of conservation.

The problem of overcollecting is also one which causes the Committee serious concern. Entomologists of all lands are being brought into disrepute by the actions of a number of collectors, mainly lepidopterists, who are plundering rare and local insects without regard to the need to conserve our insect fauna. Both Trusts for Nature Conservation and members of natural history societies who wish to protect colonies of rare and local species have expressed their disapproval of such activities in strong terms. Certain species inhabiting well-known areas, which attract both local entomologists and those from other regions, either on holiday or on a special trip, are subject to a disproportionate amount of collecting which cannot be tolerated if the colonies are to survive. There is little doubt that if the activities of these entomologists continue in this way the goodwill of the County Trusts for Nature Conservation, other organisations in the countryside, and those interested in other branches of natural history, will be alienated, and such goodwill as at present exists will not be extended to entomologists in general.

The committee urges all entomologists, of whatever depth of interest, to:

- (a) give serious thought to their collecting requirements and the need to conserve our more local species,
- (b) encourage fellow entomologists to do likewise,
- (c) and, in the case of butterflies, to pursue their interests in all stages of the insects with the aid of photography whenever possible.

All entomologists are invited to bring matters of conservation interest to the attention of the Committee.

For further information contact: Dr. M. G. Morris (Hon. Sec. Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Insects), 41 Queen's Gate, South Kensington, London, S.W.7.

NYMPHALIS ANTIOPA L. (CAMBERWELL BEAUTY) IN NORTHERN IRELAND.—

On 4th August 1969, a specimen of *Nymphalis antiopa* L. was seen flying in my garden here (Irish grid ref. J 397748). It appeared to be in good condition, and visited several flowers and also entered a neighbour's greenhouse before flying off to the west. The day was bright and sunny with a light wind from the south. The time of the sighting was 12.30 G.M.T. The last recorded example of this butterfly in Ireland was in 1960.—ANTHONY IRWIN, Glen Eyre Hall, Glen Eyre Road, Southampton SO9 2QN.